

# Christian Slaves Freed In Sudan During Covert Mission

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Huddled under a huge sprawling tree in scorching 115-degree heat, 500 Sudanese women and children crouch in fear eyeballing stacks of cash being exchanged between Arab slave traders and officials from Zurich-based Christian Solidarity International (CSI). Their freedom is worth \$35 a head, reports Charles Jacobs, president of the American Anti-Slavery Group (AASG).

"It was an incredible surrealistic scene," he told Charisma. "I watched the joy of parents and children reunited, and I heard of the ravages of slavery directly from victims."

Armed Dinka tribesmen negotiated the redemption of the slaves, which lasted about an hour and a half. Each repatriate was fingerprinted and videotaped before being reunited with family members. CSI also distributed food and medical supplies.

Jacobs returned from a covert mission in April with CSI freeing 2,953 slaves taken captive by Islamic fundamentalists. He flew into Bahr el Ghazal province in southern Sudan from an undisclosed country. Walter Fauntory, a former U.S. congressman and chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, and Joe Madison, a Washington, D.C., radio personality, accompanied Jacobs.

The slave rescue team heard firsthand accounts of horrific atrocities against black Christians. Arab-Muslim soldiers from the north raid Christian villages in southern Sudan killing the men and kidnapping women and children. Women, teen-agers and children are roped together and forced to march for 10 to 12 days and then are sold into slavery. Along the way they are gang-raped daily by their captors. In one incident four girls who resisted had their throats slit.

When in captivity women are forced to serve their Arab masters as concubines and servants fetching water and firewood and cultivating land.

"My brother and I were captured by the Arabs five years ago," said Abuk Yac Bol, a 20-year-old mother. "On the way to the north, 12 of them forced my brother to rape me while they looked on. After he was finished the 12 Arabs raped me.

"When I got to Darafat, Mukadam Ahmed took me as his concubine. His wife was very angry and forced me to have my genitals cut out. She beat me virtually every day."

The raids are part of a declared jihad (holy war) by the ruling Islamic fundamentalist regime waged against black Sudanese Christians and animists who resist converting to Islam. AASG estimates there are more than 100,000 people in bondage in northern Sudan.

Jacobs is a Jew who sympathizes with the plight of persecuted Christians. "I came from people also taken from their land," he told the former captives. "My people were also enslaved." AASG, based in Boston, can be contacted at .